

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Park and Recreation Commission

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, October 21, 2010, 7:30 p.m.

**Charles Houston Recreation Center
901 Wythe Street, Alexandria, Virginia**

Commission Members: Judy Guse-Noritake-Chairperson, Rich Brune, William Cromley, David Dexter, Ripley Forbes, Stephen (Clark) Mercer, Robert Moir, Anthony Zamora. **Excused Absences:** Henry Brooks, Jeffrey Murphy.

RPCA Staff: James Spengler-Director, William Chesley, Roger Blakeley, Jack Browand, Ron Kagawa, Laura Durham, Robin DeShields. **Guests:** Jack Story-Bowman Consulting, Planning and Landscape Architect, Greg Shron-EYA-Developer James Bland, and Katie Parker, Planning and Zoning.

Summary Minutes

- I. **Call to Order by Chair.** The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m., she noted that Henry Brooks had an excused absence. The update on the Waterfront Plan by Planning & Zoning is postponed and calendared for later meeting.
- II. **EYA Concept Plan for New City Park - James Bland Development:**
 - **The P&RC held a follow-up discussion on the status of the Concept Plan from the public hearing held on September 23.** Staff received comments at the public hearing 9/23 and Ms. Durham received some by email (For comments see attachment to Item II, and minutes of 9/23). Several comments centered on the issue of the playground area and active vs. passive use, and whether these two conditions are compatible as listed in the conditions of the DSUP. The Chair said the DSUP requirements are very specific (Item h. highlights children's play area).
 - **Laura Durham-** said due to the DSUP Conditions already approved; changes and/or amendments would need to go back to Planning Commission and City Council. The original James Bland development, now under redevelopment contained five playground areas. With the redevelopment of this site, this will be the only playground; therefore, staff recommended the addition of a play area within the new park. In response to a question from the Chair about the use of Charles Houston Recreation Center as an auxiliary play site, Mr. Spengler, stated that the playground at Charles Houston is not regularly available because of dedication to pre-school programs during the day.
 - **William Cromley-** regarding the DSUP conditions and requirement for a play area; active and passive use cannot exist together. He would like to see a separation between the tot lot and larger park area. This can occur by moving the play area/tot lot into the corner; additionally a small fence could separate the areas.
 - **Ms. Durham,** explained that the plan is a general Concept Plan, and that the final site plan will be forthcoming in approximately a year. At that time, the final details of the park design are shown.
 - **The Chair** commented that the park plan has a very strong geometry, with the play area being central to the design. If the play area design is more to itself, while maintaining the park's basic geometry, this may be a better solution functionally. The P&RC could make a recommendation for this as part of the final site plan.

- **Steven (Clark) Mercer**-followed up on discussion from last meeting about the musical elements/equipment and possible review of the plan by the Arts Commission on how best to honor James Bland. He asked if the design replaced the musical elements with other equipment, would this be a major amendment to the plan. **Ms. Durham** said that changes to the play equipment would not be a major amendment, and would not require going back to Planning Commission and City Council. **Mr. Schron** stated that he has not been in touch with the Arts Commission yet. The Applicants: EYA (Developer) and ARHA are looking to get approval of the design Concept at this point. He asked if the P&RC could approve the design with a recommendation to have the Arts Commission review the plan later. Durham stated this could happen.
- **Bob Moir** made a motion to have the Arts Commission review the Concept plan. He stated that the P&RC and staff need to review the public comments prior to making a decision, and that there had not been a lot of local input. He would support it as long as any changes do not cost the City additional money. **The Chair** said it was her understanding that the park and design were discussed a number of times during community meetings, however the P&RC was not involved.
- **William Cromley**- asked for clarification on whether this was a public park. He further stated that it is important to make a distinction between useable and visible public space. **Ms. Durham** said the park is public space dedicated to the City (as fee simple). The HOA is responsible for maintenance- public/private partnership.
- **David Dexter** asked if any of the park is open space according to the open space plan. **Laura Durham** said yes, but it is tricky because the City is losing open space throughout the development area while accounting for buying additional open space in order to expand the park. The cost was just under \$1 million dollars. **The Chair** commented that front and center to this development is the tradeoff of increased density and having open space to accommodate the new population vs. affordable housing.
- **The Chair asked if there was a motion.** Bob Moir restated his motion that the P&RC approved the Concept Plan with suggested changes of asking the developer to talk to the Arts Commission and to consider relocating the playground within the park. Rich Brune seconded the motion. All were in Favor. **The Concept Plan for the new park at James Bland approved with suggested modifications.**
- **Action Item** The Chair will write a letter stating that the P&RC approves of the intent and basic design of the new James Bland Park Concept Plan and suggest that the play area/tot lot not be a central feature of the park but instead set apart and moved to the corner. Additionally that staff consult with the Arts Commission on the design of the park's musical elements. Laura Durham, RPCA, Open Space Coordinator said the letter should be forwarded to Katie Parker of Planning and Zoning.

III. Approval of Summary Minutes of September 23, 2010.

- Richard Brune motioned to approve the summary minutes with a correction as requested by Mr. Cromley. David Dexter seconded the motion. Minutes approved with minor corrections. All were in favor. Correction made to Pg. 2, Para 5; to read ...In this particular park, he would prefer unprogrammed areas where you can go sit and read a book.

IV. Division Updates: (To view Full Staff Reports): go to

www.alexandriava.gov/Department/Recreation/Commission and Committees.

A. Recreation Programs and Services Update - William Chesley

- No comments/questions.

B. Operations & Park Planning Monthly Report - Roger Blakeley

- The P&RC discussed the Parks & Sports Customer Satisfaction survey. Question #21- Why did you visit the park today? Ten people skipped this question; some possible reasons: more answer choices needed; a category is needed for other recreational activities; the person was not at the park at the time they completed the

survey. Mr. Forbes asked who completes the survey/what the sampling - of 37 people is. Mr. Blakeley said the survey goes out with all of his emails and that of his Park Managers. In addition, Councilman Rob Krupicka is now carrying the survey on his emails. Survey is not a scientific process but a way for staff to look at improving maintenance and services. The P&RC could also send with their emails. Bob Moir said the survey is not representative of the City's population of 125,000 people. The Chair asked when the Recreational Needs Assessment, completed in 2002, would receive updating. The Assessment contained a more accurate statistical sampling of recreational needs. Having an updated survey will help focus staff resources for the future, as discussed at the Retreat. Mr. Kagawa- staff is currently obtaining bids for this project, with a period for completion within the next year. In the interim, Mr. Blakeley will hold off on supplying copies of the survey to the Commission.

C. **Office on the Arts Update** - See Staff report by Alisa Carrel (absent)

- Director James Spengler gave a brief update: **(Del Ray) Mt. Vernon Recreation Center Mural** - 2701 Commonwealth Avenue - was completed October 2 (considered temporary art, duration 2 years); **Police Memorial Project**, proposals are being accepted and exhibits are on display throughout the City and are currently at the Lee Center-1108 Jefferson St. through October 27; the **Rocky Versace Memorial** - is being prepared and cleaned up for the upcoming Veterans Day Program November 11. The "Friends of Rocky Versace" Golf Tournament was rained out Sept. 30, however donors still left contributions. Additional updates:
- **Alexandria Film Festival** - 3rd annual, kicks-off next week, with a free opening night event at the Torpedo Factory November 4, 6-9 p.m. The festival runs through November 7. For more info go to www.alexandriaFilm.org
- **The BRAC Project (West End)** - will have a mural painted on the wall where the public transportation station will be located. Funding is part of the construction project.

D. **Park Planning Updates** - Ron Kagawa, Division Chief.

- See Full Staff Report- **Jones Point Park**: VDOT received two bids ranging from \$15.5 to \$16.5 million dollars. Mr. Kagawa said advertised value was \$19.5 million.
- Discussion: **James Spengler, Director** suggested that staff push for any difference of mitigation funds to be applied towards the purchase of more open space or to upgrade parks. A letter to the Mayor and Congressman Moran should request that the balance of mitigation funds go to the open space fund.
- Mr. Kagawa said staff should keep in mind that bid process remains open before moving forward.
- Spengler- RPCA staff will review their field conversion list to help determine priorities to use up funds. Mr. Kagawa said George Washington 1 and Braddock are the next fields.
- **Action:** the Chair and P&RC members came to a consensus to write a letter supporting this idea. Staff will wait until the project is complete before taking further action.
- Bob Moir- Youth Sports is concerned that the National Park Service not RPCA schedules the new fields at JPP. Any excess funds should help fund upgrades to help replace the two lost fields. Staff is currently in the process of completing the Athletic fields at Simpson. If synthetic turf were installed it would cost approximately \$2 million. Moir- would be good to get at least electricity. **Mr. Spengler** said money was not the concern at Simpson, it was that ACPS could not state if they would use the field to build a school on the site within the next ten years. With a school there,

you will lose one field and the one left will be smaller. The **Chair** said she is not sure they can build on the field – due to an electrical transmission line present on site.

- Moir- bigger picture of the Simpson Braddock road field complex area. We ignore the large parks. We need full size fields, not pocket parks. Areas we want to put them in Council may want to hold off due to potential condominium construction.
- Mr. Moir suggested the City could put out a bond referendum as Fairfax County. This would give them a viable option for use funds.
- The Chair said this is a separate issue from the letter for use of excess funds. The idea of using excess fund towards field issues in the future is an appropriate use, although it may be 2-3 years before we know a funding amount. The Chair suggested that a field endowment fund be set up. The interest on the endowment could provide replacement of rugs/turf on athletic fields and other items. She asked that Commissioners give this some consideration.
- **Ben Brenman Field synthetic turf being installed** - Next Wednesday, November 1, 2-4 p.m., synthetic turf will be installed. A carpet viewing day will be held - size of rolls are 30" x 180'. This is a public invitation events and a press release will be sent out.

E. **Marketing, Public Relations & Special Events** – Jack Browand

- **See Staff Report** - the **St Patrick Day Parade** route is new for 2011. Rich Brune asked if the new route allows linkage to Metro and Dash buses allowing shuttles to the new parade route. Mr. Browand said that the information would be published in the Alexandria Visitors Guide; more information will be promoted, as date gets closer. The Trolley will be re-routed; Union St. will remain open.
- **City's Race Policy**- is being reviewed; new policy will mirror that of the National Park Service.
- **Virginia Tech Photography Project**- He and Ron Kagawa have been working on a program to develop a library of resources.

V. **Director's Report** - James Spengler – See Attachments

A. **Jones Point Park Update** - See IV-D Park Planning.

B. **Simpson Fields Update**- project is moving along fine.

C. **Potomac Greens**- see Attached Memo to Mayor and City Council.

Issue: Homeowners Association would like to have 1 acre of current open space to.... Director RPCA is not in agreement with this idea. Page three of memo, provides a brief staff analysis of the Pros vs. Cons of request. The Fair Market Value of this land is 3 million dollars. **Mr. Spengler** stated that the larger issue is that there is no consistent policy in the City that states under what conditions; 1.) Open space be public and publicly maintained, 2.) Space be dedicated as public open space and be maintained by homeowners/HOA (with a public access easement), and, 3.) Space be privately owned and privately maintained. Each scenario in the City is different. Some developments like Potomac Yards have a mixture.

The P&RC should ask Planning & Zoning and RPCA staff to attend meeting to discuss these issues and provide recommendations to City Council on developing a consistent policy.

- Chair- when Sandra Whitmore was Director RPCA she introduced idea that there was a hierarchy of public parks, but this was never written down or formalized.
- **William Cromley**- his biggest concern is with public/private partnerships, what is the definition of maintenance? He recently discussed with Laura Durham, what is considered repair and replacement vs. what is considered routine maintenance? There is

no answer as to who is responsible for replacement of equipment long term. Re: useable open space-he considers fountains useable open space, while buffers and setbacks waste open space in his opinion.

- **The Chair-** The open space plan recognizes all the value of all types of open space (including fields and wetlands). The City needs to have useable open space from developers. She and Commissioner David Dexter spoke about this and other emerging issues including reinstating a dedicated source of funding for open space including taxes and other sources.
 - When Planning and Zoning attends meeting in November the P&RC needs to address the issue of land purchased with open space fund, which they want to build commercial ventures on in the Waterfront plan. The P&RC needs to help develop this plan. The option of a land lease could be source of funding back into the open space fund on a consistent basis; however from a policy standpoint should staff be purchasing land with open space funds and then leasing it out.
 - Chair- The list of action items from the retreat includes open space. We need to establish benchmarks for open space in large developments. Five or six years ago staff thought there was not going to be many new open space plans. Focus has shifted now to redevelopment of a number of sites, such as the Big Box, Landmark, Beauregard Corridor, and Eisenhower West. It is not raw land that is going be developed now, but parcels of land that will be highly developed, increasing population density. The P&RC needs to have a role and needs to be more prescriptive about having useable open space, not just visual open space. Goal is to re-establish the Open Space Committee, which will involve coordination with the Planning Commission, Environmental Policy Commission and other groups.
 - David Dexter- we need to update the park inventory, so staff will be ready to take advantage of opportunities when they come up. Laura Durham-we should actively pursue funding and conservation easements and protection of open space.
 - **Action: The Chair will write a letter to City Council requesting that the Open Space Committee be re-established and asking that they address some emergency policy issues.**
 - Laura Durham- she plans to attend the Environmental Policy Commission meeting, they will also write a letter to City Council. Ms. Durham will coordinate with the Chairs of the EPC and P&RC so they can coordinate letters and have a focused response.
 - **Ripley Forbes** follow-up question regarding Potomac Greens request for 1 acre of open space. He asked if the P&RC needed to take action on this item and expressed concern with the possibility of City Council taking action on this item without issue coming back to the P&RC. **Ms. Durham-** stated this would be a major amendment that would go back to City Council. Mr. Spengler said it would helpful if the P&RC drafted a letter. **Action:** The Chair said the P&RC should wait until Planning Commission reviews matter first.
- D. **Lake Cook Fishing Pier & Activities (at Cameron Run)** - See Attachment draft letter from Mayor to Paul Gilbert, Executive Director and Todd Hafner, Planning Director, NVRPA.
- Background** - when Restaurant Depot got new development approved it proffered \$.5 million contribution to park and recreation development in the Eisenhower Valley area. FY 2012 CIP process will determine what will be done with funds. RPCA staff developed a list of suggested projects for use of funds in Eisenhower Valley. Some Council members are suggesting using funds to upgrade the fishing pier at Lake Cook because students use it. RPCA staff prepared a letter to NVRPA requesting that this be added to their list of capital projects, as it falls within their purview. The City owns the land but NVRPA leases it. Ron Kagawa and Laura Durham met with NVRPA staff to discuss this issue. Mr. Spengler asked the P&RC to let him know if they have suggestions for use of the .5 million. **Action:** The Chair will review the list of recommendations

prepared by RPCA staff first before providing input. Laura Durham said in Clermont Cove there exist an opportunity with NVCT (Northern Virginia Conservation Trust) for an open space easement.

E. **ACPS Facility Request-** see Attachment, **RPCA Space Options for Proposed Pre-K/Dental Programs (October 2010)**, prepared by William Chesley.

- RPCA received a request to use Recreation Centers for pre-K and Dental Clinics. ACPS Pre-K programs has 300 children on the waiting list and needs more space. ACPS originally requested to use the Recreation Centers during the day, next day staff received another request to use for a Dental Clinic. RPCA's initial response was that if space was available it can be used however, there are other activities going on at Recreation Centers, that might be impacted. The proposal for daytime use has now changed to dedicated use of space. There is a staff group (School and City staff) that meets and processes all facilities requests. Recommendation was made to use this committee to review issue, staff approached committee and found that they were unaware of the requests. Mr. Chesley developed a list (See Attachment) of availability space in Rec. facilities. Requires at least 525 sq. feet and dedicated space for pre-K.
- **Judy Noritake- Chair**, we will need restrooms adjacent to space and monitoring of children using restrooms. This is an urgent concern by Councilman Rob Krupicka; he will attend the next meeting in November to discuss.
- The group discussed using mobile clinics as an option. The Chair suggested seeking a grant for a mobile dental clinic that could be moved from school to school. Mr. Spengler-Dental clinic staff has looked at this issue mobile units (cabinet).
- The Chair said there needs to be a broad Commission discussion on what the Recreation Centers are being used for. As new schools are built, staff should look to see if a Community Center is needed as well. Mr. Spengler as new schools are being planned (Patrick Henry, Cora Kelly, Jefferson Houston, and Potomac Yards), need to look at how the design may need to be changed to accommodate these requests. In response to a question from Mr. Moir, Mr. Spengler said a large number of children on the waiting list live in the West End near William Ramsey School.
- Bob Moir- new schools do not have adequate sized gymnasiums, which limit their use. We are being asked to give up space and are already short of space. We need decent size fields and gymnasiums.
- The Chair asked where are the modular's going at Patrick Henry. Mr. Kagawa stated one would be placed in the interior courtyard, and one on top of the existing playground.
- Chair- the ACPS public/private partnership has been delayed for now. She will have breakfast with Yvonne Folkerts, Chair of School Board, and John Komoroske, Chair of Planning Commission on Monday. There are still no plans for Cora Kelly or Patrick Henry schools.
- Mr. Forbes- commented that the Campagna Center has a head start program and asked if they are part of the discussion. St. Paul gave them space to expand their head start programs. Spengler- the Superintendent wants the school to take over head start. Chair- it is a change in philosophy.
- **William Chesley-**
- His concern in speaking with the School facility group is that he is not certain ACPS took a hard look at space within their own schools-resource rooms. ACPS stated nothing available in the West End. Cora Kelly in Arlandria can hold 500 students-only 400 students are enrolled, there may be space. Chair- another concern is the staffing and security requirements of putting a Pre-K class in a Recreation Center is huge. This will require dedicated staff. Chesley- William Ramsey may not have enough staff. Multi-

purpose rooms if taken will be a problem as kids use room for snacks. Other concern is who will be responsible for set-up and break down of rooms. These concerns need to be addressed before a decision is made. Action: The Chair stated if this moves forward a public hearing should be held so that users of Recreation Centers can voice their opinion.

VI. Retreat Action Items:

- A. Continued Discussion of Draft Bylaws - Operating Procedures for Commission.
- B. Develop list of items to address at P&RC meetings.
This Item has been DEFFERED until further notice.

VII. Reports From Commissioners (verbal updates)

- **Ft. Ward Ad Hoc Advisory Commission**- Bob Moir, Ripley Forbes, Rich Brune.
- – Rich Brune- group is winding down; and will disband by January 13, 2011. A holiday party will be held December 26. The First draft of the report is completed, and the second draft is out for review.
- Report recommends increasing walking and nature paths, eliminating alcohol outside museum, moving playground to ADA accessible area, moving/eliminating or better delineating the dog park. P&RC members are in agreement with these recommendations.
- **Spengler**- intent is to place the final draft of the Committee's report/ recommendations on the web for comments prior to a final vote. RPCA staff will review for factual content and make comments. One recommendation may be that City Council appoints a permanent group to oversee the Park. P &RC members will wait until the report is final then provide comments.
- Spengler-the report will go to the City Manager and key departments will have an opportunity to review and provide comments. A Docket item/update on Ft. Ward Park will be done. RPCA will review each recommendation. Chair- the letter from the P&RC to the City Manager will become part of staff report. RPCA staff will keep the P&RC informed of status; the P&RC should also review draft.
- **Youth Policy Commission** - Stephen Mercer
- – Last month held a public forum at Charles Houston to listen to neighbors. Group went door-to-door encouraging people in the community to come out-had pizza for the children. New Recreation Center was discussed, feedback since the change from the old Center to the new one Center some lost a sense of community and family. Some users of Center expressed concern that patrons are required to show identification at the new Center and that the space feels sterile and a little restrictive so some children are not motivate to use center.
- Next month meeting will be held at Patrick Henry in the West End then move to the Central District. The Commission will continue meeting until it is permanently disbanded to merge with the new larger Youth board.
- **Waterfront Committee** - William Cromley
- –Still waiting on the final Waterfront Plan to be approved. Planning and Zoning will be asked to return to present the final plan to the Commission.
 - **Other -Lights at Ft. Ward Park.** Mr. Forbes sits on the Alex. Master Soccer Board. When the lights go off at 10 p.m., staff are blinded and cannot see how to get out of the park (using cell phones). Group is now getting insurance, this is a liability issue. In the future, need to look installing a small inexpensive lighted path, solar pathway and/or put a security light at the top of the stairs. Action: Mr. Spengler will ask RPCA staff to investigate and make a recommendation.
- Additionally, Mr. Cromley asked if new lights that are being installed at new fields could possibly stay on until 12:00 p.m. at least on weekends. RPCA staff said this is field specific, and timing for lights is determined by City Code. Mercer- commented that he plays in a Sunday night league from 10:00 to 12:00 p.m. which is the only time for adults to play. Action: The Chair will discuss with Councilman Rob Krupicka in November.
- **Youth Sports Committee** - Jeffrey Murphy (absent)

- Bob Moir and William Chesley did not attend November meeting.
No report.
- **4-Mile Run**- Ripley Forbes
- – The Chair reported that the joint meeting between City Council and the Arlington Co. Board held on 10/14 discussed cross-border issues mostly dealing with transportation. There was 15-20 minutes devoted to 4-Mile Run during mtg. information was very well received.
- **Farmer's Market** – The Chair and Laura Durham will attend the final Farmers Market on Sunday. They are looking for volunteers to help paint the Duron building (using Benjamin Moore Paint, color- red.)
- **Charles Houston Memorial Project** - William Cromley
- – No meeting.
- **Freedman's Cemetery**- Bob Moir
- – No meeting.
- **Beauregard Corridor** - David Dexter
 - **Beauregard Small Area Plan**- A meeting was held September 30. There is currently no transportation plan for the Corridor. The community circulated a petition to the Mayor and City Council stating that they do not want any increase in density in corridor until there is satisfactory transportation solutions implemented. Many residents signed the petition.
 - **"Friends of Dora Kelly Park"**-Clean-Up Day, October 23- flier distributed. Mr. Blakeley asked Mr. Dexter if he would send him a report on the number of volunteers and the number of hrs. worked.
- **ACPS & Capital Improvements**- Henry Brooks (absent)
- An evening football game will be held on October 29 at T.C. Williams H.S., (T.C. vs. South County). Stephen Mercer has been working with the neighbors. Commissioner Anthony Zamora (H.S. youth member) will play.
- **Other**- none

VIII. Agenda items and location for November meeting.

- Waterfront Plan - by Planning and Zoning -TBD
- Councilman Rob Krupicka - Pre-K school issues.
- Eisenhower Valley List.
- Location: Charles Houston Recreation Center.
- Not meeting in December.

IX. List of Upcoming Public Meetings - distributed at meeting.

X. Adjournment: 9:20 p.m.